

TRANSCRIPT

United States Department of Agriculture • Office of Communications • 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-1300 • Voice: (202) 720-4623 • Email: oc.news@usda.gov • Web: <http://www.usda.gov>

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Contact: USDA Press Office (202) 720-4623

TRANSCRIPT OF THE WYOMING FARM BILL FORUM WITH MARK REY, UNDER SECRETARY FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT AND MODERATOR JUSTIN MILLS OF THE NORTHERN AG NETWORK AT THE WYOMING STATE FAIR IN DOUGLAS, WYOMING ON AUGUST 18, 2005

MODERATOR: Thank you for joining us here in Douglas this morning as we get kicked off with our Farm Bill Listening Session. It is a pleasure to have you all here with us. And of course for Barney Cosner and all the folks at the Wyoming State Fair, they're very appreciative of you guys being able to have a chance to come down here and see. Unfortunately, they were kind of wishing they probably had more of those buildings done down there. But, unfortunately, with some of the activities that happened earlier this summer, we're kind of in the middle of construction. But, nevertheless, you can see the future of what this State Fair Complex is going to be, and it's really exciting for the State of Wyoming.

Before we get started too far, I just want to remind folks if you have a cell phone, if you just out of consideration of everybody here and everything, if you could please either put that on vibrate or go ahead and shut it off, we would greatly appreciate that. I went ahead and did that to mine a little bit ago, because mine crows like a rooster if I don't, so that's a little bit intrusive to our meeting here today.

But, again, it's good to have you here with us. My name is Justin Mills. I'm with the Northern Ag Network. And we do provide radio and TV agricultural markets news for here in Wyoming. We've been doing that since about 1975, and it is good to be here and to be able to have this opportunity to moderate something that is as important as this, as the next Farm Bill for United States, and how important this is for developing policy and the future for the next generation of agriculture.

We really appreciate Under Secretary Mark Rey for joining us here today. And, in addition to that, for being willing to change the location of that meeting from where it was originally scheduled in Jackson, and to be able to be here in Douglas with us, where so much of the agricultural industry is here this week. And so we do appreciate that flexibility in his schedule. And, again, we do thank you for that very much.

Again, it's very important, these Listening Sessions of the Farm Bill, it's very important. It's been several years since we've seen the development of a Farm Bill starting from the grassroots level. And I think when you think about it in that aspect, it plays a lot of importance that we have the administration coming to us, asking us what do we want to see in this Farm Bill.

The 2002 Farm Bill of course established some very progressive ideas in terms of providing some sort of an incentive for producers on conservation-based efforts, and that's been very – something new that we haven't ever seen. I know for some producers here in Wyoming, it's some of the things we're starting to uncover ourselves. But it does provide that financial incentive, and really gives us the opportunity to start planning on how we can continue the

agricultural industry, not only for the generation at hand but for the next generation that we see. I think it's important.

I see a quote by a guy by the name of Brian Tracy says, "Action without planning is the cause of failure. Action with planning is the cause of success." And I think that clearly indicates – gives us a very clear aspect of where we are with the Listening Sessions and why we have these as they are.

At this point in time, I'm going to introduce Mr. John – actually, before we do that, we're going to go ahead and start things kind of on a patriotic note, and I'm going to bring forward Christine Dona to come forward. She's with the Converse County 4-H, and she's going to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Pledge of Allegiance is recited.)

Thank you, Christine.

I've already introduced Under Secretary Mark Rey, and in a little bit you'll hear some comments from him. But before we go too much further, I'm going to bring forward Mr. John Etchepare, who is the director of agriculture for Wyoming, to give us some opening remarks for this Listening Session here today.

[Applause.]

WYOMING DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE JOHN ETCHEPARE: Thank you, Justin. I'm going to be very brief. The secretary didn't come to listen to what I have to say; he's come to listen to what you have to say.

I want to start off by encouraging all of you, please, don't sit there, "Gee, I wished I had said that." Everyone will have plenty of time. You'll have the time to say what you need to say. Please use this time. This is an opportunity, a rare opportunity you have. Use it. Make benefit from it.

I just want to take a second and thank my staff for all their efforts in getting this pulled together on very short notice, so that we could do this. I'm sorry we couldn't have gotten the word out sooner. I know I've talked to the secretary and Justin, and Justin will address the means by which those of you who have friends at home who couldn't get here and couldn't do this, as to how they can play a part of this also by submitting comments and so forth to the secretary. And it will be handled just as if they had been here. So be sure and get that information – Justin will give it to you – so that you can use that.

The 2007 Farm Bill is of utmost importance to the State of Wyoming, the preservation of our past and our continued agricultural strength into the future. You can see for yourselves the future of Wyoming agriculture in these fairgrounds, and in the people in the room this morning.

Our top priority must be to the continued productivity, viability and existence of the family farm and the ranch operations within our state and across this country. Wyoming is a state firmly rooted in agricultural production. It is the sustaining element of our struggling communities and their economic survival. We are an aging state in multiple respects, but perhaps the greatest consequence is the loss of our young farmers and ranchers to keep our communities sustained.

In the 2007 Farm Bill, it is imperative we continue to bring forth programs designed to assist beginning producers and young adults with the incentives and mobility to enter the industry and remain viable. We must keep agriculture education programs in our schools and colleges, and maintain our level of commitment to funding agricultural extension.

The new Farm Bill should be focused on the continued existence of agriculture as a visible and sustaining industry in the United States, and our citizens we cannot continue to sacrifice American agriculture for greater trade relations in other areas. Instead, we must build from within, extending and strengthening our industry to keep the American way of life that our country was founded upon.

We must also focus more attention on the animal health threats and disease issues. Funding research and education of insect and diseases must be a high priority for the continued health of our livestock and livestock industry.

When we tackle the Farm Bill, we must continue to support our youth involvement in programs in agriculture. We must find ways to improve our young adults into having agriculture careers, giving them the incentive and necessary training. We must continue to protect and screen our borders from foreign disease and invasive species threats. And we must promote programs that work to benefit our land and serve multiple conservation goals that are not financially detrimental to the men and women who have committed themselves to the dedication of agriculture.

Thank you, Under Secretary Rey, for being here today, and thank you for my short time. And, again, I encourage all of you, please, take this time and use it.

[Applause.]

MODERATOR: We also have some distinguished guests with us here in our audience this morning. I believe we have some representatives from some of our other Congressional delegation. From Representative Barbara Cubin's office, Josh Carnahan – is he here? I haven't seen him yet. There you are, Josh, how are you? Thank you for being here.

[Applause.]

Also, from Senator Mike Enzi's office, his state director, Robin Bailey. Is Robin here? Thanks, Robin, for being here. You bet.

[Applause.]

And of course we also want to introduce a very familiar face, I know a lot of you will recognize up here on the stage, and that is our senior senator, Mr. Craig Thomas. Give him a hand – you bet – as he comes forward.

[Applause.]

You know, he sits on a very powerful committee, that being the Senate Finance Committee, and it's important that we have a voice in Wyoming on that committee, and we really appreciate the work that he's done for us back in Washington. And, again, Senator Craig Thomas.

SENATOR CRAIG THOMAS (R-WY): Thank you, my friend. Good to be introduced by the junior representative for the broadcast corporation.

Well, thank you all for being here. We're really very, very pleased. All of you I think were here yesterday, when we had a good meeting, and we're delighted to have you here.

I think it's particularly important. You know, sometimes we have to remember that the federal government, the Department of Agriculture, the secretary and the vice president, all of them, have national responsibilities. So as they look at things, they have to look at the whole process. And if you're on the Ag Committee, as I am, you understand how much pressure we get from cotton and tobacco and those kinds of things. So it's particularly important that we talk with our particular interests to the Secretary and to the assistant secretary, and I think it's great.

I'm very pleased that we have a secretary of Agriculture now from Nebraska, who is more accustomed to the things we are, as opposed to others. So I think that's great.

So I'm very, very proud to be able to introduce to you, and to have with us today, making a special effort to go around the country, and made a special effort to come here, to come to Douglas – flew in this morning – has to go back to Douglas this afternoon to go about his ways – is Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and the Environment, Mark Rey. That's the responsibility that Mark has, number two in the Department of Agriculture. I've worked with him for some time. He was on the staff at the Energy and Public Lands Committee, represented there particularly the interests of public lands and forests, and has had a good deal of background in those kinds of things – also in the private sector, where he worked in the forest industry and has done all these things. Mark has a background in education, in the area of forestry and environment. And so the things he's responsible for have a great deal of impact on what we do in Wyoming. So it's with a great deal of pride that I welcome and introduce to you Under Secretary of Agriculture Mark Rey.

[Applause.]

UNDER SECRETARY MARK REY: Thank you, Senator Thomas. This is actually my second trip to Wyoming in the last month or so. On both trips, I met with Senator Thomas. And on both occasions, he chided me for being in a suit and tie. And last time I was here I told him the story about why I always travel in a suit and tie: it's because about the fifth month into this job, I went on a field trip in California that was sponsored by the Natural Resources Conservation Service to look at conservation practices in the Central Valley. And we all arrived at the appointed time, early in the morning, to start the trip. And a guy, a local NRCS employee who was running the trip was very nervous and excited, and looked at his watch and said, "My goodness, we're already behind schedule. Let's just all get on the buses and we'll do introductions at the first stop." Okay, everybody got on the buses. We drove to the first stop. And he was so eager to get into his conservation presentation that he forgot about introductions and launched right into what he wanted to show us. And then looked at his watch when he was done, and said, "We're still late – let's get on the bus and keep moving." And introductions were forgotten. By the second stop, I noticed one old fella sort of hanging in the back, as I was doing. But he was craning his neck around. He was obviously looking for something or somebody. And so finally he kind of sidled up to me, and he said, "Which one of these guys is the new knucklehead from Washington?" (Laughter.) And I'm fairly certain, dressed as I am, none of you will be at risk of a similar situation.

But thank you, Senator Thomas, once again, for introducing me. As a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, Wyoming has an ardent, passionate supporter of agriculture in the United States Senate in Craig Thomas.

I also want to recognize the State Fair director, Barney Cosner, and his staff, for the hospitality that they've extended to us to put this session together. It's my pleasure to be here this morning on behalf of Secretary Mike Johanns to hear directly from you – Wyoming's farmers, ranchers, and rural residents, about issues of concerns.

In preparing for the development of the 2007 Farm Bill, Secretary Johanns announced in June the first in a nationwide series of Farm Bill forums to be held across the country. The first forum was held in Nashville, Tennessee – and Secretary Johanns has conducted seven more since then, and has planned several other forums reaching into the first part of next year. The secretary and the various undersecretaries, like myself, will also be conducting forums such as this, all in the hope that no voice is left unheard as we develop this next Farm Bill. And I want you to know we are listening to your views. Justin here can attest to that. He wrote me an e-mail telling me where this Farm Bill forum should be held, and the next thing you knew, he was moderating it. So you can see we are listening.

As Senator Thomas mentioned, I am the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, with jurisdiction over the Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. My career has been spent working on conservation. And, as you may know, the Farm Bill is one mechanism that helps us do that.

The previous Farm Bill was considered landmark legislation for conservation funding, and for focusing on environmental issues. The conservation provisions of that bill have assisted farmers and ranchers in meeting environmental challenges on their land. That Farm Bill also simplified existing programs and created many new programs, all seeking to enhance the long-term quality of conservation on our working farms, ranches and forest lands.

What goes into a Farm Bill can have long-lasting effects on our nation's natural resources, and that's why we're here today: to hear your thoughts, comments and concerns on what should be included in the next Farm Bill.

To that end, Secretary Johanns and we have developed six specific questions that we're seeking dialogue on here today.

The first question relates to challenges to new farmers: How do we prepare farm policy to provide a future for new entries into the agricultural community? Our policy should welcome the next generation of farmers and avoid unintended consequences, like higher land prices, that make new entries into agriculture more difficult.

The second question relates to how we stay competitive in the world marketplace. Over 27 percent of the cash receipts for agriculture come from abroad. That's a very, very large piece of all farm income across the country. And in order to see that trend continue, we must remain competitive in both domestic and global markets to succeed, because our rate of consumption is only half of our rate of production – or the increase in our rate of consumption is only half of the increase in our rate of production, I mean.

The third question relates to Farm Bill farm program benefits. Is the current distribution system the most effective way of distributing benefits? Benefits should stabilize incentive farm prices and incomes. The current programs – crop insurance is a good example and we've had some conversations about that already – distribute assistance based on past and current production levels.

The fourth question, the one nearest and dearest to me, relates to conservation: How do we do our conservation policies in a way that provides for cooperative conservation? I continue

to believe that our farmers are the best conservationists in our nation. Some suggest anchoring farm policy around conservation and tangible benefits produced – like cleaner air and water and a less developed landscape.

The fifth question relates to rural economic development. How can federal rural and farm programs provide effective assistance in rural areas? If you look back at the Farm Bills of the past, there wasn't much there relative to rural economic development. But in the 2002 Farm Bill it was a pretty significant piece of the puzzle. Farming and rural America were once synonymous, but demographic and economic characteristics of some rural areas have changed, and some believe that farm policy should invest more in infrastructure in rural areas.

And then the last area is expansion of agricultural products, markets and research. We have great resources at our disposal in the research area at USDA. What are we doing right with those positions in terms of research? And, if we're not doing things right, what should we be doing instead? Because agriculture is rapidly changing, and some say our policies should do more to help develop new products and new markets.

You may have seen as you walked in that we have a help desk just beyond that doorway. Those folks manning that desk are USDA employees who are on site to assist you if you're here for help on a specific issue that's not related to these six Farm Bill areas. Please utilize that service if your interest falls in the category of fixing a specific problem on your operations.

Also, if we run out of time, or if you simply think of something you forgot to say, please know that you can always go to www.usda.gov and click on "Farm Bill Forums." The comments submitted on the Web in writing or voiced here today are all given the same weight and the same exact amount of study and analysis.

Finally, before I wrap up, I notice a fair number of young people here in the audience. You're the reason that President Bush asked Secretary Johanns and senior agricultural leaders to conduct this listening tour. Because we hope the ideas and advice that we get pave the way for your future success in agriculture. So don't be shy about stepping up to the microphone and letting us know your views as well.

Again, thank you for being here today and I look forward to a productive discussion this morning. I'll turn the microphone back to Justin.

[Applause.]

MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Under Secretary Rey. And I do kind of have to comment about the – when I found out it was going to be in Jackson, I immediately sent a – I found his e-mail on the Internet – it's amazing what you can find on the Internet – and I went to work writing an e-mail, and which I got a quick response back that says, "We are in the progress of moving this to Douglas or Casper – stay tuned." So we do appreciate him listening on behalf of that aspect of it.

I'm going to outline maybe just some of the rules here on our Listening Session just a little bit. As Under Secretary Rey pointed out, we have six questions in which we'd like your comments to kind of be contained under answering those six type of questions. Did everybody get a copy of those questions? If you didn't, raise your hand, and I think they're going to try to get some to you. Raise your hand real high. It looks like everybody's okay on that. And those are the questions. I'm not going to reiterate those at this point in time. I think if you all have a sheet, you can look at those, and Under Secretary Rey just went through those. So I'm not going to repeat those at this point in time.

Again, one of the things on this is that with this format we're going to have three minutes. We're going to have three minutes in which you will be able to provide comment. We have two microphones – there's one there, and there's one there. If you would please come forward to the microphone and when you give your comments – and we will have – also one of the things you'll notice up here on the front of the stage is a light system – kind of works like a stoplight: green means "go"; yellow means you better wind her down; and then red means we're going to – there's an electric shock that comes out through the microphone and gets you. Okay? So be very aware of that, and be very respectful too of that, because that's the aspect and respect of the USDA coming forward to present this Listening Session. Let's be respectful of that time limit that we have in place.

Under Secretary Rey mentioned there's a help desk outside that if during this or afterwards you have additional comments you'd like to have – a lot of you will have written comments of what you've already said, and you want to go ahead and submit those, you're more than welcome to. Keep in mind this whole Listening Session will be taped and will be transcribed into scrip, which will also go towards the comments. But, again, you can take the comments – you've already written them out and you've already spoken. Feel free to go ahead and put them out there. There will be a box out there in which you can put those comments. Or if you don't want to feel like you want to speak today, you can put them in there. And, as Under Secretary Rey said, you can also go to the Website, if you get home later today and you have some comments, extra comments you'd like to add in, you can go to the Website and do that as well – very easy Website – you go to the usda.gov. It's there on the bottom, right-hand bottom side of the page. It's easy to get to, very easy to understand.

Again, the help desk is for that area too, for comments that may not relate necessarily to Farm Bill issues – put those comments in there, we'd appreciate that as well.

As I said, we have two microphones for you, in which you can come forward to give your comments. One of the things we'd like you to do, as with any good style of communications, means you kind of need to identify who you are. So we'd like you to give your first name and where out here in Wyoming you're coming from, your city – probably they're going to recognize the state. And of course also explain your involvement in agriculture, because that's important. That gives the influence about the perspective you're coming to in these comments. So it's very important to give what your perspective is or your involvement in agriculture and connection to the Farm Bill. And also maybe, if you have a mind to mention what question you're talking about and what question you will be doing in that.

So, again, the two microphones. And I think we're just about ready to get started. We're going to have a break later on, and we'll kind of get things going. But let's go ahead. And at this point in time, I believe that we will go ahead and open the floor for the first comment that anybody would like to give. And you can just come forward to one of the microphones. Nobody wants to be first. Oh, there we go.

MR. RANDY STEVENSON: We thank all of you for being here. I'm Randy Stevenson. I'm a cattle feeder from Wheatland, and I would like to address I believe it was question 2, on U.S. competition, competitiveness. And I was encouraged that you tied both foreign and domestic competition together, because that is what I would like to see, is that we have a competition title in the Farm Bill. Many of us-- there's some that compete nationally or globally--but most of us sell locally, and we sell to corporations that compete globally. And if there isn't competition amongst those corporations, domestically we suffer. The producer suffers. And that is what I really encourage, a competition title in the Farm Bill. Thank you.

MODERATOR: All right, thanks, Randy.

We'll take our next comment.

MR. SCOTT ZIMMERMAN: I'm Scott Zimmerman, and I'm representing Rocky Mountain Farmer's Union this morning. First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. Under Secretary, for being here today in Douglas and accommodating Wyoming's agricultural producers. Our organization has a long history of supporting family farmers and ranchers, as well as rural communities. We feel it is imperative that the next version of the Farm Bill recognize the relationship of producers to rural communities and vice versa. For too long federal farm programs have shifted payments towards larger, and in many cases, producers both individuals and corporations who don't reside in these rural communities, and away from the family-sized producer who resides and shops locally.

Throughout our great nation's history, these rural communities have been the backbone of our country. Today, many Reservists serving in Iraq call these communities home. We must refocus the next Farm Bill – whether it's the commodity, conservation or rural development title – back to family farmers and ranchers and the rural communities they sustain. These rural communities have long provided the training ground for tomorrow's agricultural leaders. Federal farm programs have provided the safety net to cushion the hard times inevitable in agriculture. We must continue to provide that net – not shrink or abandon it totally. We recognize the budget pressure the next Farm Bill will face on Capitol Hill, and that's why it is imperative to target these financial resources to family-sized operations in our small rural communities. Thanks for the opportunity to comment today.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

MR. JIM MAGAGNA: Jim Magagna with the Wyoming Stockgrowers Association. Welcome back to Wyoming, Mark, good to see you again.

The cattle industry has not historically been a significant player in the Farm Bills. We've not been dependent on commodity programs. As the current Farm Bill moved more into environmental type and conservation programs, it's become far more important to our industry, and therefore we anticipate playing a much larger role, and appreciate the opportunity to help guide this bill.

A couple of general comments I would make. First, is it's important that the Farm Bill, and particularly the conservation provisions, be targeted to the ag industry. I know that there are a wide array of constituencies out there who would like to see these programs work directly to meet some of their needs. I think that their needs are legitimate, but they will best be met by providing the funding to our working farmers and ranchers to implement the conservation practices that lead to a healthy environment that meets the broader societal needs.

The second general point I would make is the need for increased flexibility in the various Farm Bill programs. We've seen much more of that in the current Farm Bill. I think we have not yet reached the level where they provide the – particularly the flexibility to your people in agencies such as NRCS working at the state and local level--to adapt to meet the local needs.

With that, looking briefly at a couple of the key issues or questions that you've identified, as far as competitiveness in global markets: One of my members summed it up very well, I believe, with the statement: "Don't ship U.S. agriculture overseas." In other words, give us the tools we need to remain competitive. One of the primary tools is to reduce the regulatory burden that we all face in production agriculture today. Another one is to ensure that not only that we

have trade agreements, but that those agreements are vigorously and consistently enforced as against the other nations that are trading partners.

And finally, an area that I believe that USDA has certainly let our industry down, and can be an important tool in making us competitive, and that would be we're asking that USDA get firmly on board with implementation of mandatory country-of-origin labeling. That's essential if we're going to be competitors, that we be able to identify our product.

Mr. Under Secretary, you mentioned research – that, too, is critical. And here in Wyoming we depend very heavily on our University of Wyoming research and the formula funds that they receive from the Farm Bill. And we would ask that those be strengthened and continued.

In terms of the conservation programs, I believe the flexibility that I talk about is important. The incentive part is important. We have producers who are still reluctant to use these programs because of the federal nexus and the mandates with regard to endangered species, cultural resources, et cetera, that they might impose. We need to have some of those burdens removed.

Last point, with regard to our rural communities, let's not forget the social aspect of this: rural health care, affordability and availability is one of the most serious issues facing our producers.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Jim.

MR. JIM MAGAGNA: Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Jim.

Just a reminder here, that as you see him, sometimes it's kind of hard to talk to somebody that's not looking at you, but trust me he's taking notes up here, so just continue to carry on your conversation.

We'll take our next comment.

MR. BOB KIDD: I'm Bob Kidd from Casper, and I ranch a little bit and am involved in other businesses so I can afford to ranch. And Jim Magagna's comments about formula funds is a great segue for what I have on my mind.

I would say that the reason we are here and comfortably clothed and air conditioned and well fed is because of our land-grant colleges of agriculture. And I would offer that Abraham Lincoln didn't make a mistake when he signed the Morrill Act in 1862. The colleges of agriculture have evolved into what they have evolved into very carefully over a long period of time, and it's given us our standard of living and competitive edge in the world.

Housed in USDA is CRSEES, the Cooperative State Research Economics – how many E's are there? – Education and Extension Service. And they have the budget that funds the land-grant colleges of agriculture. It seems to me that last February, when the president's budget was made public, some of the base funds that Jim Magagna spoke to – for example Hatch and McIntyre-Stennis – were zeroed in the president's budget. I would like to allow that the president probably doesn't know a lot about Hatch and McIntyre-Stennis, so it wasn't something that he specifically requested. It was just overlooked, as these base funds are being transferred into competitive grants.

We, the small states specifically, are going to have a very difficult time obtaining competitive grants working against the larger states that have colleges of agriculture with greater research capacity than we perhaps do. So the base funds are critical to us. It seems like CRSEES is being relegated to a less important position. We can't – I'm sure Senator Thomas recalls hearing about this. He was very supportive, as well as our other members of Congress – but it's something that we really need to be sensitive to, because it would probably – just the loss of Hatch and McIntyre-Stennis – reduce our college of agriculture budget here in the State of Wyoming by about one fourth. And so I would say that all six of these questions are addressed in a stronger college of agriculture.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

All right, we'll continue to take comments.

MR. RICHARD CROSS: My name is Richard Cross. I'm a local rancher in Converse County. I'd like to address number one and number two.

In this county we have a real problem now with the value of land, because wealthy people from out of state are coming in and buying it up and making it almost impossible for a young person to purchase land, or for a legitimate rancher to expand his operation. I would like to see a lot of these wealthy people coming in from out of state-- and they take up fake residency in Wyoming, and therefore they don't pay income tax from the state they come from--I would like to see more stringent regulations put on their residency. And also, as you know, Wyoming doesn't have income tax, so they don't pay income tax here when they say they're a resident of the state. I don't think that's fair. I think if they don't reside in Wyoming, and if they only fly in occasionally in their jet and look at their land, and they're not actively involved in the management, their land should be taxed at residential and not agriculture rates. I think this would discourage a lot of these people coming in from out of state and buying up land and paying outrageous prices for it and making it difficult for the legitimate person to get into it.

On the second one I think I want to commend our senator for staying fast and voting against CAFTA. I think that's a real detriment to agriculture and the beef business. It's ironic we're around the world fighting for democracy, yet when a poll was taken in this country 98 percent of the people polled on CAFTA were against it. Yet our Department of Agriculture supported it, pushed it through Congress. Now that it is a law, I think that we deserve at least the respect and dignity to have our beef labeled where it comes from. I think it's very important that COOL be implemented in the new Farm Bill.

Recently I was in Nicaragua and saw how they slaughter beef down there. It's disgraceful. And to think that that beef is going to come into this country and we won't even know as an American consumer that it isn't American beef. I would sure like to see COOL incorporated into the Farm Bill. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Richard. Go ahead, Bobbie. And, Juan, you can wait there and we're ready to go.

MS. BOBBIE FRANK: Thank you. Thank you for coming to Douglas. I'm Bobbie Frank. I'm with the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts. I'm going to speak specifically to question number four, in terms of achieving how best to achieve environmental policy and goals. First, we'd like you to explore the option of consolidation of some of the Farm Bill programs. Still allow them to meet the different resource needs and goals for which they

were established – such as EQIP, WIP, but for efficiency sake at the field level, I think there's legitimacy into looking at streamlining those programs and consolidating them.

Nancy, I hate having my picture taken.

Second is we believe that looking at that option would allow for more time for field people to actually be in the field working with the producer.

There are certain programs that we believe need more local conservation district input and involvement in, such as grassland reserve, farmland protections, so that there is a local review and local priority view of those programs.

Third, I spend a considerable amount of time talking to our local conservation district that was the first CSP sign-up in the state. They believe that the program was successful. It was extremely time-consuming. One bit of input was to ensure that we have adequate staff to deal with the sign-up period and the workload involved in that, considerable amount of paperwork – we understand why – to ensure that the program is defensible, accountable. The average I was given was approximately 12 hours per producer to get through that sign-up.

However, on CSP one of the challenges we're facing in Wyoming is due to the need to have a soil survey to qualify for CSP. Forty percent of the state is still not mapped in Wyoming. Thanks to our Congressional delegation and financial commitments from our county commissions across the state and our districts, we've been able to accelerate that, and we would like to see that continue. Half of the state wouldn't even be able to participate as a watershed in the CSP until that is completed.

Eliminating the program payment limitation, the annual limitation that's placed on some of the programs; where if a producer wants to actually do the work in the first three years of a 10-year contract, let him do that, and just keep a contract limit without the annual limitation.

In the last Farm Bill, EQIP placed a priority on the livestock producers to help them meet the regulatory needs, and issues that we were facing from EPA through the animal feeding operation and concentrated animal feeding operation. We believe that's an important priority still. We don't believe that work is completely done.

And to address the issue of cooperative conservation, we need to make sure that there's not a misunderstanding of duplication between EPA programs and USDA programs. And with that, thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Bobbie.

Come on forward.

MR. JUAN REYES: My name is Juan Reyes, Southeastern Wyoming farmer\rancher. And what I would like to comment on is maybe none of the rules and maybe all of them that you've gotten written down, to comment. And what I would like to see is more vigilance in protecting our private property rights. Without them we wouldn't be competitive; we wouldn't be what we are. We would just be another country. So please look into the erosion of our private property rights. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Juan. You forgot to stay for your photo op there.

All right, we'll go over here.

MS. MARY RANDOLPH: Good morning, Mr. Secretary, and a warm welcome to the rural state of Wyoming. My name is Mary Randolph, and I'm executive director for the Wyoming Rural Development Council. In addition, I'm chairman of the executive board of the National Rural Development Partnership. I'm going to focus on question number five.

In 1972, the Rural Development Act gave the Secretary of Agriculture the responsibility for coordinating federal rural development programs. In 1990, the Presidential Initiative on Rural America created the National Rural Development Partnership and state rural development councils. In the Farm Security Act of 2002, the National Rural Development Partnership was authorized, giving state rural development councils and the National Rural Development Coordinating Committee unique and unprecedented authorities. The Farm Bill's conference report set high expectations for the partnership. "We expect the NRDP," Congress said, "to make significant progress toward the goal of better coordinating the rural public policies and programs of federal agencies, and developing greater collaboration between the federal government, the states and others with resources to invest in rural areas." The challenge we have – rural America faces many challenges – challenges resulting from economic, demographic and social elements such as low population density, out migration, poverty, and lack of community capacity and advocacy. The rural population, both older and less educated than its urban counterparts, is deeply impacted by changes in agriculture and the loss of industry and manufacturing. Additionally, rural communities are distance- and geographically-separated, rendering uncoordinated programs and services ineffective. Policymakers must understand the elements that make rural America unique before they address their needs.

Constrained resources. Rural America must have adequate financial and human resources to address the challenges faced by its communities and residents. But more money in the same old one-size-fits-all uncoordinated program is not the answer. The answer is the National Rural Development Partnership, a national rural development organization made up of state rural development councils and the National Rural Development Coordinating Committee as already recognized in the 2002 Farm Bill as an organization with strong linkages at both the governmental policy level and with rural communities and residents. Enacting the NRDP provisions, Congress did not intend to create a new delivery system, but to empower a state-federal network to help public officials and local rural leaders as they address local needs.

The National Rural Development Partnership is the natural vehicle through which challenges may be addressed. The state rural development councils, by working with the NRDCC, will provide an important and unique means through which the federal government can constructively interact with other public entities and the private sector to efficiently and cost-effectively serve rural America.

What we are asking of USDA for the 2007 Farm Bill is to continue to reform and improve the delivery and structure of rural development programs to better serve the well-being of rural communities; reauthorize the National Rural Development Partnership language; and for USDA to support funding for the National Rural Development Partnership through an appropriation. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mary.

MR. KEN : (In progress) – Conservation Reserve Program, the Conservation Security Program. The Conservation Reserve Program, particularly in the large blocks, has found difficulty in finding its end use. We're going to be 20 years on some of these acres pretty soon, and we haven't totally come to an end-use idea on them. Putting them together would lead to a longer-term management plan that doesn't just dump them back in production and give away all

the conservation benefits we've spent the money to build up. But you could find some end use for those as a part of a managed CSP. However, that does require CSP has better funding and a lot more emphasis. You can wait watershed by watershed. If you're going to put those together, you're going to either have to speed up that process dramatically, or create a separate tier in the CSP for the current contracts so that they would stay alive and work their way into that transition. So there are a couple of ways to do that. But my first choice would be that you put more emphasis and more money into the CSP to get there quicker for everybody. But the second choice would be – or maybe required anyway a separate tier initially to proceed down that line.

In addition to that, that kind of also points to where the money flows. One of my problems with current CRP large contracts is that the money tends to flow – you see the Wall Street investor walk in and buy land that he's never seen, wants a CRP check, because the whole block is in the CRP, and he needs a map at the county office to go find his property when he's in to sign it up. I have a problem with that, folks. I have a real problem with that. I like to see the money flow to managing operators. And landlords are always going to benefit by good operators, good conservation, good management. But we need to try to resolve it so that the money flows through the operators to achieve our goals doing that. So, with that, thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Ken.

MS. PAT HORTON: Hi, I'm Pat Horton, and we own and operate a small family farm outside of Riverton. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today. I would have been home picking up bales, if I hadn't come down to chaperone kids. So I'm glad of the opportunity to do this.

I work outside the home, and the main reason I work outside the home is to provide health insurance for our family. And I think that's a critical issue for farm families. I've got three sons I would like to see in the agriculture field. It takes – you know, to insure my family it's \$1,200 a month. And I know that's not – that is just the tip of the iceberg for many. And you know where I work, for a school district, I can get on a group plan or family plan, and I still have a chunk of my check go towards that. But that's – most of us have to supplement that family farm somehow to be able to survive.

The other issue I'd like to bring up: Our legislature addressed the split-estate issue this year. We're in an area where we run the surface rights, but we do not own the minerals. I don't know if the farm plan is the place to do this, but I know that the regulations are real loose with how many wells can be drilled within a certain amount of acreage. And I would really like to see that addressed somehow. We have taken advantage of the conservation things to do many improvements on our farm, but we find ourselves farming around wells. And so I would just like to see the fact that there are some things that – trying to drill on existing well sites instead of – because it's pretty liberal right now where they can drill and how close, because we don't have those mineral rights. Thank you for this opportunity.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Pat.

Again, I'll have the young lady go first, and then --

MISS JESSIE BERRY: Hi, I'm Jessie Berry. I'm from Wyoming. I live on a registered Hereford ranch about three miles northeast out of Cheyenne, and right now I guess my big play in agriculture is not only living and working on that ranch, but I'm also the president of the Wyoming FFA organization here today.

And when I came to this, I saw it more as maybe a question process more than just comments, so I'm just going to leave you guys with some questions, and hopefully some answers will come out in the Farm Bill.

Now, first of all, I'd like to address number one, and how you talked about new farmers and the next generation and how you want to see this come into play. I see a huge problem with urban sprawl, and I want to know if the private property rights encompass the urban sprawl. Where is the land going to come from for these new farmers to get involved with? This farming I know is a lot of work, watching my dad work, watching former generations work. I don't see the same work ethic in this next generation coming up, and I'm wondering how you are encouraging and motivating people to stay in agriculture, especially where, as the last lady just spoke, my mom also works at a school that has the insurance and that's a sure thing, because the agricultural industry just does not provide that right now for our local ranchers.

Next I had a question for number two, with competition domestically and needing country-of-origin labeling, and having that mandatory. I want to know how we're going to go ahead and implement it to be mandatory. But also, following up into question number three, the cause of that for the farmers and the ranchers, because I know as they're struggling right now to deal with the drought and other issues that are going on, I do not see how cost effectively this is going to work, especially if it is mandatory. I would like to see it mandatory, but I do not know how you are going to provide the funding for that to happen.

And then finally to wrap up with number five, how can federal and rural farm programs provide effective assistance in rural areas? – that's just reemphasizing another question – that I didn't know exactly what was in place right now and how we're going to better that for the next Farm Bill. So just to know where that land is going to be, how we're going to stay competitive domestically, where we don't have a lot of land right now, and how we're fighting with that for farm policies.

So I thank you for your time today and hopefully those questions will somehow come out in the next Farm Bill. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Jessie. I think that's a pretty good example, I think, of the younger generation that has --

[Applause.]

You bet. Even myself, you know, a few years older than she is, but several years younger than many of you probably – there is a question – that's probably the best way to describe what the younger generation is thinking about the Farm Bill, and just the questions of how do we get back into production agriculture.

So, Ken, go ahead.

MR. KEN HAMILTON: Thank you, Justin. My name is Ken Hamilton. I work for the Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation. I'd like to welcome you all here today, and thank you for coming to a central location. I live in Laramie, and I appreciate not having to drive seven hours to get to this.

The American Farm Bureau Federation has policy on farm programs, and we'll be deferring to a lot of their policies. The Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation members have had a long-standing policy asking that farm programs be ratcheted down. We feel that this is an

important thing. And I think perhaps it's related to the make-up of the agricultural community in Wyoming. I think it was mentioned earlier that several agricultural operators don't have a stake in the farm programs and don't see them as something that plays a large role in their operation. You asked for several questions, and I'll talk to a couple of them.

The unintended consequences. There's been several economic studies done nationwide that indicate farm programs do drive up the cost of agricultural land. Capital requirements have been identified in several surveys of young agricultural producers as impediments for them getting into the agricultural operation. One study that I'm familiar with indicated that 14 percent is roughly what happened with the 1996 Farm Bill for inflating land values.

Having said that, though, I would say that Wyoming is not typical, and this impact doesn't really relate to Wyoming. Several studies done by the University of Wyoming indicate that other external factors drive the ag values in Wyoming – scenery is one of the big ones. And I think that some of those folks have addressed those today. I'm not sure a farm program or a farm bill has any way to address those.

One of the other unintended consequences one of our members was talking about an LDP payment that they received on malt barley, roughly 25 cents a bushel. The next year the contract for the malt barley came in 50 cents a hundred weight less, or roughly 25 cents a bushel less than what it was the previous year. The implication obviously is that once the USDA steps in then some other entities – corporations – will take advantage of that. The money going into that farmers pocket was zero, even though they did receive some money from USDA, they also got their name put up on the Environmental Working Group's Website.

Some of the impacts in Wyoming that do affect our producers and I think need to be addressed are drought and fuel costs. Drought – we've got a hydrologic drought and a agricultural drought. We need to address irrigated agriculture in the farm program. Many of our members I think have complained – Lois VanMARK, our state head, and so I won't bore you with the details there.

The last thing I want to touch on though is I think one of the things USDA can do and needs to be aware of is the impact of other laws. Right now we're looking at ammonium nitrate being pulled off the market because of homeland security. USDA needs to step up to the plate outside of the Farm Bill. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Ken.

MR. OLIN SIMS: Justin, my time starts now. All right, good morning, Mr. Under Secretary Rey, Senator Thomas, Director Etchepare. My name is Olin Sims. I'm an ag producer here in Wyoming, a rural supervisor on my local conservation district, but speaking today as the second vice president of the National Association of Conservation Districts. I'm here representing the nation's 3,000 conservation districts, and over 17,000 elected and appointed officials that are in place charged with protecting the nation's soil and water resources at the local level. I'd like to take this opportunity to stress the importance of the conservation title in the '02 Farm Bill, and also the importance in the '06 Farm Bill.

The ag industry, working collectively with their local districts, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, has done an outstanding job of enhancing our soil and water resources, utilizing the conservation programs available in the current Farm Bill, and we need to see that these are maintained in the next Farm Bill.

It's critical that we provide our ag producers with adequate conservation technical assistance through the NRCS to help produce an ample food supply, while protecting and enhancing our soil, water and air resources in this nation. Many producers utilize this assistance from the NRCS without requiring financial assistance to make conservation-minded decisions when working their lands. This type of assistance is critical. It seems that the conservation technical assistance is often overlooked. But, please, let me assure you it's an extremely vital component to a viable conservation delivery program.

Our job is twofold. The first is we must see that adequate technical assistance funding is available for NRCS for Farm Bill conservation program work; but just as important is adequate assistance for non-Farm Bill program work. The ability for a producer to be able to call the local field office to ask for technical assistance outside of a program is critical in our mission to being stewards of this land.

The current Farm Bill programs have helped ag producers develop thousands of acres of wetland, protect millions of acres of highly erodible lands, irrigation efficiency projects in times of drought here in the West, has helped producers develop sustainable grazing systems – and all these programs have worked well to conserve our natural resources, and have been fully embraced by our ag producers.

The Farm Bill conservation programs currently available, such as the EQIP program, has helped producers bring their operations into compliance with federal rules such as the AFO/CAFO rule to meet the demands of the federal Clean Water Act. This technical and financial assistance helps both the stability of the ag industry, and also is an investment into the enhancement of our natural resources for the future. These programs are sound for the environment and for our local economies.

Mr. Under Secretary, the National Association of Conservation Districts has formed a Farm Bill task force. We're working with our member states across the nation – such as Wyoming right here – in developing an outline blueprint for the next Farm Bill, and we stand ready to work with you and Senator Thomas, with the members of Congress, in drafting this next Farm Bill.

Lastly – and I see the red light is on, Justin, but one last comment. Mr. Rey, I want to commend you and your staff, your leadership team, Chief Bruce Knight, for being such good partners working with the conservation districts across the nation and the ag producers. Justin, it's all yours, bud.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Olin.

All right, we'll take more comments.

MR. TED TOOMBS: My name is Ted Toombs, and I'm an ecologist with Environmental Defense, the Rocky Mountain Office. And I work with land owners and other conservation organizations here in Wyoming. Thank you for the opportunity to comment today, and I'm going to address question number four.

The 2007 Farm Bill could do much more to help agricultural producers and the environment. Shifting the focus of the Farm Bill toward conservation would help a greater number of producers by rewarding stewardship, helping operations remain profitable, and enhancing the communities they live in. Last year, only 12 percent of the Farm Bill funds were used for conservation in Wyoming. Most of the land in Wyoming is rangeland. Healthy rangelands provide clean, plentiful water, maintain healthy soils, purify the air, protect open

space, and provide abundant wildlife habitat. The citizens of Wyoming and the nation benefit greatly from these services, but many producers are economically vulnerable and cannot bear the entire expense of conservation.

Livestock producers are not eligible for commodity subsidies, but they are eligible for conservation funds. Currently these funds are not enough to meet demand and, as a result, many producers who want to take steps to help the environment have gone without support. At the end of fiscal year 2004 in Wyoming, almost \$25 million of applications were left unfunded. A Farm Bill that invests money in conservation will help Wyoming producers meet the state's most pressing environmental challenges. For example, more funding for EQIP could reduce the backlog of applications and help farmers and ranchers improve the health of rangelands, mitigate for the impacts of drought, fight the invasion of noxious weeds, and restore wildlife habitat. A significant increase in support for grassland reserve and farmland ranch protection programs is needed to allow farm and ranch families to keep Wyoming's most important lands in agriculture so that they are not developed.

And, finally, boosting funds for the Conservation Security Program would further reward the ongoing stewardship of agriculture producers of all types. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Ted.

MR. JOE WARWICK (sp): Mr. Under Secretary, my name is Joe Warwick. And before I spent 40 years in agriculture hoping for a profit, I was as tall as the last guy that spoke. But it's wearing me down. (Laughter.) I appreciate your time here, and the opportunity to have input. I have three points that I want to speak to: concentration, which has been so ably addressed by Mr. Stevenson already; energy, which hasn't been addressed; and then the side that's always been a big part, and that's administration, which has in some parts been addressed. My comments will be brief in that concentration I believe is inevitable, and I am a free market entrepreneur. But I believe the government's role shall continue, and should continue to make sure that the concentration happens with the greatest amount of integrity possible and the greatest benefit to our nation in the competitive area that we heard about earlier.

On the energy side, I would refer you to comments given by Dr. Dwayne Acker at the Iowa Hearing Sessions, and the 25-by-25 Agriculture Alliance on Energy. Wyoming stands to gain a great deal from energy sources other than coal and oil. We know that our cattle will do very well in the shade of oil wells. It may be well that they do – it maybe is true that they do as well in the shade of windmills. And I hope that the energy title in the Farm Bill can understand and respect the potential for diversification from crops and meat to energy as a source of income for family farmers.

My grandfather homesteaded, one of the last, in 1907, in southeast Wyoming. My grandsons would like to be in agriculture if in fact my eternal optimism doesn't turn to pessimism.

The administration side. I would hope that we clearly understand that the best Farm Bill written is only as good as the administration and the staffing of the offices that serve the producers is critical, that it's at the appropriate level with the appropriate technology. And as we transition from the programs of the '30s to the programs of 2050, that we make sure that the technology and the training is appropriate, and that the staffing levels are not reduced inappropriately prior to the transitions. Thank you very much for your time.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Joe.

MR. TIM PAXTON (sp): Good morning. Welcome to Douglas. I'm Tim Paxton, third generation rancher from south of Douglas – that way. I'm at the northern edge of the Medicine Bow National Forest. My ranch includes about 2,000 acres of forested land. Today I'd like to address some forestry issues as they relate to the Farm Bill. It's probably something you haven't heard a lot about in any of these forums.

As you know, the old SIP and FIP programs were phased out in the late '80s. They were both specific to management assistance to private forested lands. In 1992, SIP and FIP were replaced by FLEP, a very good program, which was again designed to assist private landowners manage their forests. The problem is the Forest Service has been borrowing from the FLEP account to cover fire suppressant costs over the last several years. In fact, cost-share funds that were available under SIP and FIP have been reduced by as much as 80 percent today in Wyoming under the FLEP program.

Now, with this reduction in funding, we have been encouraged to utilize other Farm Bill programs, such as the EQIP program. Although it does allow for the funding of forestry related practices, it is seldom utilized for that, due to limited funds and the prioritization of other, mostly water-quality related practices. Now, water quality is of high concern to us, as it should be; forested lands provide water for many Wyoming communities and are the headwaters for many of the major rivers in the U.S. As such, these forests, both private and federal, serve as the initial resource to protect water quality. So it would seem to make sense that we raise the priority of funding for the management of these forests.

A lack of management has contributed to the forest health concerns in Wyoming, such as the mountain pine beetle, the Douglas fir, the white pine blister rust. Timber stand improvement practices can serve to address these issues. However, these practices are very expensive and require long periods of time before a return on investment is realized, if ever.

To that end, the search for and the development of alternative markets for the biomass that is produced by forest management practices at least needs to continue, and ideally could be expanded.

I'm impressed with the stewardship contracts that the Forest Service and BLM have begun to use, and I think that program would be beneficial to private landowners as well. Perhaps tax credits and other incentives could be used to help with all these issues.

As is the case with the rest of the nation, we are facing changing landowner demographics and forest fragmentation issues. Landowner education is extremely important, and is a key factor in increasing forest management practices that meet the public's demand of our forest. To that end, extension programs should be strengthened to provide direct technical assistance.

I believe we need the Farm Bill to endorse the idea that private forested landowners can provide clean water, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat and other ecosystem services if their forests are managed accordingly. Perhaps the Forest Service could study this concept, educate others, and incorporate it in their plans for private forested lands.

In closing, I believe there is a need for stable and adequate funding to assist non-industrial private forested landowners with their management practices that will be beneficial to society as a whole, while addressing concerns related to the potential for catastrophic wildland fire and insect and disease occurrence in the nation's forests. Thank you.

MODERATOR: All right, thank you, Tim. Thank you for those comments – a different perspective that's very applicable to here in Wyoming. Appreciate that.

At this point in time we want to take about a 10-minute break – kind of stretch your legs a little bit. The restrooms are out, as you kind of came in there, and you can go use the restrooms. There's some booths set up outside there as well, and we'll be back in 10 minutes. Thank you.

(Break.)

MODERATOR: Joining us here now is our senator's lovely wife, Susan Thomas. We do thank you for joining us. [Applause.]

As everybody kind of finds their seats, Director of Agriculture John Etchepare wants to make a few quick comments here regarding some of these comments here today.

MR. JOHN ETCHEPARE: There were a number of you that I talked to during this break. I can assure you the secretary and his staff will be able to figure out which one of those six categories the question you have may fit in. I know there are some of you sitting there not wanting to come up because you're not sure it will fit. Please, come up, ask the question, what's bothering you, the issue you have. I can assure you they'll find out where to put it.

There's also a number of you who have come to me to ask me to ask things of the secretary – don't go through me – this is your chance to go direct to the source, so, please, use this opportunity. Thank you.

MODERATOR: All right, thank you. And, again, does everybody have those six questions? If you don't, raise your hand, they'll get some to you. And, again, we're going to go ahead and get started again. So there were some people, some folks – Brittany, you have some comments? – so go ahead and come forward to the microphone and we'll go ahead and get started again.

MISS BRITTANY WESTLAKE: Well, thank you very much for this opportunity. My name is Brittany Westlake. I grew up in Kemmerer, Wyoming, where we are active in the cattle industry, and we also own a meat-processing plant. But I also have, as well as Jessie, have a different view on the agricultural industry, as I am taking on a new endeavor: I was just selected as a state candidate to run for a national FFA office. So national ag issues to me are very, very, very important right now.

And so as a young agriculturist, there are a few issues on our radar screen that I feel are not being discussed here, and that concerns me in a sense. Some of the topics that are being discussed are relevant and direct, and affect several of us directly. But I'm also noticing that some of these topics have been some of our FFA extemporaneous speaking topics for the last four years. And I think while some of these issues are still relevant and still important, I think that there are other issues that are coming onto the radar screen. That concerns me that we are not discussing those types of issues either.

Some of those include – I am glad to see that we are talking about global trade policy. That is something that our generation is very, very concerned about. The face of agriculture is changing drastically. Yes, we are losing family farms. Yes, urban sprawl is an issue. But we also have things like biotechnology, nanotechnology and agriscience is a huge part of our generation. And I would really like to see something like that incorporated into the Farm Bill. I hope that when we are working on legislation like this we are preparing for the long run and not

just the short run. I think the Farm Bill is very important for us to take into consideration the long run, and not just solve the problems that are right directly affecting us now. I would just really encourage us to try and have a positive and encouraging and welcoming attitude for young agriculturists. And I was actually just speaking with some of the other folks here this morning, and one of them said, "I think it's very important that we have an encouraging and positive outlook for young agriculturists and invite them into our industry." And we have lots of – several ag – where we go out into the industry and we tell them ag issues that are affecting us as producers and consumers, but lots of times those have a negative effect. And I would like us to focus more on a positive note of agriculture and all the great things that we do as an industry, and also some of those ag issues that are, as a young agriculturist, are on our radar screen. I thank you for this opportunity, and thank you for being here.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Brittany.

All right. Right here.

MR. ED WERNER: Good morning. Welcome to Douglas. My name is Ed Werner. I work for CANDO, local economic development organization here in Converse County. And we have worked with the USDA now for a year or two in helping promote some of the Farm Bill programs, in particular the energy efficiency and renewable energy portions. And I just want to go on record in support of those programs and in fact, like everyone, would like to see greater expansion and support for those.

Wyoming in some ways is just now catching onto the benefits of renewable energy, especially on the farm or ranch. And with ever-increasing fuel costs and energy costs, it's going to become much more important, and I think it's a great opportunity to help some of those producers out in the country to lower some of their bills and to see the light, as well as the obvious situation: becoming a revenue stream as the bigger projects become more viable in the State of Wyoming, and we get the transmission here in place and stuff like that.

I do have one concern in that as we've held some workshops on the Farm Bill is that there seems to be quite a lag time between the rulemaking, which ultimately allows for the funding, and the deadline required to get those grant applications in. This last year I think it was down to like around two or three months, and for many people that's quite a process to go through that grant writing. And as much assistance as we can to offer them, it still takes time out of their busy schedule, and especially in the springtime, which is a very hectic time for producers, it became very difficult, and we've seen that in the results in Wyoming in the lower number of applicants and successful grants that have been released here in the state as compared to other areas in other states. So I encourage in some way if possible to give more time for those grant applications to get in, or more appropriately to extend the period of time, so we're not doing a year-by-year, wait for the rulemaking to see what the grant requirements are going to be. If we could extend that so that the same rules could extend for more than just that short period of time in some way, I think it would be of great assistance. And, again, I just want to offer a real sound round of support for that program. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Ed. You bet, with CANDO, one of the experts in what is in the Farm Bill now in energy development and renewable energy, and they're very good at that. Thanks, Ed.

Any other comments?

MR. SCOTT GEORGE: I'm Scott George from Cody, Wyoming. I'm a farmer, a dairy farmer, and a beef producer. I'm going to talk about a dirty word. It's called entitlements or

subsidies. I've served on the Farm Service Agency Committee in our area, and we've had some – an issue has come up that I want to bring to your attention. Back in 1985, the Farm Bill required that all farmers that wanted to participate in government programs, direct loan payments or direct payments to the farmers, had to sign up their acreage and yields. That program has been carried forward now for 20 years already. A lot of farmers in those days didn't sign up. And because they didn't, then in order to have any payment go towards those lands, the farmer had to take a non-irrigated yield base for his yield in the calculation. This is kind of difficult to explain, but they take the yield base times the payment times the number of acres.

In Wyoming, all of our land, or most of our land, the majority of it, is irrigated, and in many parts of this country the land has to be irrigated, or there is no yield. So in our county, yields for corn is zero – and you put zero in a multiplication equation, and you get zero payment on a direct payment. Our yields for barley or corn or small grains were set like 7 a bushel or 8 a bushel – miniscule payments – but we were required under that Farm Bill in 1985 to require to take that non-irrigated yield, and it's not fair to these farmers. Now we have young farmers coming in and taking over some of these lands, and lo and behold, their land was not enrolled and they're stuck with this yield, because they're not given an opportunity to change it. And that needs to be – there's an inequity there that needs to be addressed. I have a paper about it that I'll give to your staff that you can look at.

I want to talk to you too about dairy. Our government seems to be just overwhelmed with free trade agreements, and they love them, and I understand you know you mentioned that 27 percent of our income comes from export markets. And I understand the need for trade, but we need to have fair trade. Now, I'm only going to address the dairy issue, because that's what I'm mainly dealing with – there are a lot of others that are dealing with the beef and the lamb and the wool and things. I want to talk about the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada. Canada, in their dairy industry, has a set production level. Each dairy farmer can produce so many gallons of milk, period. Anything else, he has to dump, or he has to go away with. So he cannot grow his herd. So what he does – every year they will cull about 25 percent of their herd. They will have a 50 percent heifer calf crop, and they're only going to use 25 of that or half of that calf crop. So they've been dumping those other half in the United States. And I realize since 2003 that shut off, but that's going to open again. They were dumping 6, to 7,000 head of dairy cattle into our country every year. And it led to a huge surplus in our dairy industry. And back in 2003 – I see it, Justin – I'm hurrying – in 2003 our prices just plummeted. We saw \$8 milk – prices lowest I had ever seen in 30 years of dairy farming, and it's a great inequity. If we're going to have free trade agreements, we need to have fair trade agreements. And that's what I'd like to say on that issue.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Scott. And, of course, he's a representative on the Wyoming Beef Council, the dairy industry. And we want to thank the Beef Council for postponing your meeting this afternoon so you could join us here this morning – Ann Wittmann and the board sitting over there.

We'll take our next comment. Leo?

MR. LEO MCDONALD (sp): Well, thank you. I'm Leo McDonald (sp). We ranch and have a feedlot in Montana – also have a ranch in Bowman County, North Dakota, and an interest in a seedstock herd here in Wyoming. And we didn't get it from inheritance – my wife and I built it from scratch.

I'm glad to see that USDA is looking at trade and our global markets. It's awful timely, especially since we went from, what, a \$29 billion trade surplus in agriculture to I believe this year a trade deficit. We're in the cattle business. Historically we've had a trade surplus on value

and a trade deficit on volume. Now we have a trade deficit on both value and volume. We've seen our cow herd go from 110 million in the '80s to around 90 million today. And during the '90s we lost about 10,- to 15,000 farmers and ranchers a year. Now, some of it, as this gentleman explained, is due to concentration. Others of it is because we have a failing trade policy. We have a contracting industry, both in cow herd and producers.

So it's great to see you looking at this. Some of the things I'd like to see USDA address through the Farm Bill – obviously – and I met with Dr. Butler here a couple of weeks ago out in D.C. – is one of the problems we have in the global market with beef is the tremendous distortions of TRQs or tariffs. You know, the average tariff on beef across the world is 85 percent. Here in the United States it's basically zero, especially on our inbounds. How are you going to compete with that? Basically we're locking our market open, free access, while the other countries are shutting it out. It not only directs it to us, but it also lowers – those kind of high tariffs lower the demand for beef in those countries. So we need to address that somehow, and the sooner the better, because we're losing right now. And one of the things we might look at as we look at all these distortions we have in the global beef market through the Farm Bill is trying to find some offsets: How do we offset these things to keep ranchers in business until they're addressed globally? Maybe it's through capital gains breaks, maybe it's through an exclusion just for ranchers for the death tax – you know, to keep the death tax in there. But something is going to have to be done to level that playing field.

The other thing that's caused tremendous damage to us in the last two years is the lack of harmonization on SPS issues. BSE has been a prime example, and I know we visited with the senator about it. But we need to harmonize these standards. This whole idea that we give access to gain access, such as giving access to Canada and hope other countries will follow, is not working in agriculture. That's why our trade deficit – why we went to a trade deficit.

Those actions alone have cost the U.S. cattle rancher nearly \$3 billion, according to KSU, Kansas State University. That's a tremendous loss for U.S. cattle producers. We also have the SDEs, the export subsidies and numerous things. Right now we're trying to get special rules through. So those are some of the things we'd like to see addressed. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Leo.

MS. HELEN JONES: Good morning. My name is Helen Jones, and I'm the chairwoman of the Wyoming Board of Agriculture, and I would like to discuss with you today the livestock assistance program timeliness payments. One of my responsibilities is to represent the constituents in my districts. And Wyoming, as you well know, has had a sustained drought for many years, and those people are hurting. They're calling me, asking, "Helen, where are our livestock assistance payments? We signed up for them, we hear that the computer software is outdated, something is wrong." My question to you is: What can you do to process those payments timely? Those people need them immediately. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Helen.

MR. GENE HARDY: Good morning. I'm Gene Hardy, lifetime rancher here in Converse County – raise cattle and sheep. I also serve on the Board of Ag, and I also serve on the state PAC Board. That's Predator Animal Control.

I'd like to speak to you on a slightly different issue, but I think it applies on three of your questions there, three, four and five, how you can best help rural agriculture. It can be done by addressing predator management. This is an issue that is totally out of control here within the state, and it's only getting worse. I can tell you that over the years sheep numbers in the State of

Wyoming have gone down in the last 30 years from maybe somewhere around four million to less than a half a million, basically because of predator predation, and also by some regulation that's kept sheep off of some of the summer permits – and that's a different issue that I'm not going to address.

But I know that there's been efforts in the past to take predator management funding out of USDA. I hope that you will look carefully at that, because without it we are in deep trouble. We already are, and we need all the management we can get, all the help we can get. I can tell you there's people right in this room today that have had severe losses from the wolf. That's the big issue that's coming down on us, and we have no way of knowing at this point in time what the management of that animal is going to be, if and when it ever gets taken off of the federal control.

So I urge you through the USDA don't cut any funding for wildlife services. They're already struggling. They're getting more and more calls for assistance than what they have either the personnel or the funding to take care of today. So that's the issue that I think is imperative at this time, and I'd urge you to make every effort you can to see that we can get more help in that respect. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Gene.

Any other comments?

MS. LOIS HERBST: Lois Herbst with Wyoming Stockgrowers Association. I'm president of the group. But right now, since Jim so eloquently stated our positions, I would like to speak to you as a cow-calf producer. And I represent the second generation only on a 100-year-old ranch. And I think being responsible for this ranch has made me aware of the knowledge that people have when you speak to ranchers who have been in business for many, many years. Believe me, you're going to learn that we know what is right for our industry. But before I get into that, I want to thank you, Under Secretary Rey, for the support we get for animal health issues. We need all the research and involvement by your department that can be made to protect the health of all animals in our industry.

Also, in the forest management planning process, I hope you will be very careful that the grizzlies and wolves not be allowed to impact us any further than they have. We are working on delisting these animals, but I understand the forest management planning could have – there could be better arrangements for the grizzlies and wolves than what we're wanting to see. If you would please watch that.

What you can do to help young people would also help old people. I thank you for the assistance you have given us in the drought program. Stockgrowers normally for years did not want government subsidies. We didn't accept them. Many of the old-timers still do not take government subsidies. And I consider the drought programs you have gave benefit to us, I really appreciated them. I have learned to sign up for anything that will put a dollar in my operation just about, including the conservation EQIP programs. I really appreciate being able to develop water. John's department told us several years ago, Get ready now for the next drought. We're in one now, but the next one will occur. So I'm working to develop water.

But what really will help the young and old: watch the trade agreements. I read the minimum risk rule, the process, followed it, and I think USDA worked overtime opening the Canadian border, and not giving enough consideration to the negative impact to producers. And they have the statistics in the minimum rule.

Thank you for this opportunity.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Lois.

MS. BUTTONS JACKSON: Hi, I'm Buttons Jackson, and I grew up and have lived in Wyoming most of my life. And what I would like to say are several things. And anybody who knows me very well knows that I speak my mind. And what I would like to see the USDA, is get Canada instead – instead of saying U.S. – United States Department and Canadian Department of Agriculture, please remember that hits is the United States Department of Agriculture.

The – (tape flip, short audio break) – people up the food chain may get income from trade agreements, we do not. So when you work on those trade agreements, you need to keep in mind that the people in here, the effect that the trade agreements have on us.

I think that producers can withstand drought. We can withstand predator problems. We can address some of those issues ourselves. We don't necessarily have to have handouts from the government, provided we have the ability to be profitable – profitability works every time it's tried. When you walk into an establishment or you walk into a farm or ranch that is profitable, the corrals are fixed, the barns are fixed, the houses are painted, the livestock is in good shape. But when there is no profitability, those things are not always addressed. And the trade issues, at least for the rest of my lifetime, and I think my children's lifetime, are going to be the trade issues and the impacts that those have on production agriculture. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

MR. CASEY MADSON: My name is Casey Madson, and I'm president of Wyoming Wheat Growers, and also a wheat producer in Southeast Wyoming. And you know you said earlier about this being for the young people coming up, and I think there needs to be some programs that are more friendly for the younger producers to get these guys in there, make it – give them some opportunity, some optimism on future markets, a way that they can make a living, and be comfortable in their living.

I also want to say kudos for the white wheat incentive program. I think it was a good program, and maybe some of them would be a good deal to get people doing it. Thanks.

MODERATOR: Thanks, Casey.

I'll do this one, and then, Keith, I'll go to you. Go ahead.

MR. LES BARKER: Thank you. My name is Les Barker from southern Wyoming, a rancher for several generations, and I'm proud to be that, and I hope to continue that – grandkids growing up. And with that we've been asked to become more competitive, and question number two relates to that. We've also been asked to become more efficient to offset the higher regulations and restrictions that's been imposed on us, and that increases our cost of operations, as well as all the other factors that have brought the costs up that make it hard for us to compete with other nations. And now CAFTA has opened that up so that it's going to be quite hard for us to do that. In other words, we're going to have to tighten our belts in other ways. And I'm proud that you have come to listen to us, and I hope that our comments will be of some value to you, because it is important that as Jackson, Buttons has mentioned that, that it is the base of this country, and our country was found with the grassroots, and the decisions were made by grassroots, and that's what's made it who it is and what it is.

But as I see USDA starting to make decisions that seem to be the answer, and not listen to us, it becomes hard for us to understand how the two work together. Secretary Johanns made the comment that beef was too high, and it was very hard for us to understand him: How can that be, if we're to keep from going out of business, the 13,000 of us per year average? And so my point to this would be it's great to have the Farm Bill in some ways, but then to sell us out in another way seems very hard. So we're going to need to have country boards and labels so that we can identify our product, so that we can work hard to maintain those standards, and I appreciate you coming and listening to us, and thank you very much.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Keith.

MR. KEITH KENNEDY: Good morning, Mr. Under Secretary, Keith Kennedy with the Wyoming Ag Business Association. There's always a great deal of uncertainty surrounding every Farm Bill that comes up. But there is one thing that we're reasonably certain of in agriculture, and that is that technology will be playing an ever-increasing role. In connection with that, the formula funding for the land-grant colleges is the most important independent evaluator of those technologies. And as these technologies come along, and we're sure that they'll come at an increasing rate, it's very important that we continue – if not increase the funding for the land-grant colleges and for the research that enables small producers – and even the largest agricultural producer on the land, would be unable to fund the type of research that's necessary to be an independent arbiter of these technologies.

Secondly, to develop our rural communities, I think we also need to look at where technology is going, and we may also need to consider something similar to rural electrification of 70 years ago. High-speed Internet and comparable technologies are something that rural America has to have to maintain a pace with urban America. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Keith. I just want to add as you're coming forward that if you do have comments, and you know it's in regards to the Farm Bill, but you're having a hard time assigning it to a particular question, let's – you know, you're more than welcome to share those comments as well. So –

MS. KERRY HENDERSON (sp): Good morning. My name is Kerry Henderson, and I'm a cow calf producer on the eastern side of Converse County. I have two items. One of them is communications. In a sparsely populated area like Wyoming, cell phones – a lot of them – are going to digital. Most of us still need to use our analog band phones, and they're making them illegal in the future, taking more and more of the analog off the towers. We are left with no communication. We even use our cell phones now in our fire trucks, because of the low-band, high-band radios are not fully effective.

So with no resource for communication, we also have no access to Internet. And it's not just – the towers are in your population centers or your towns. And once you get outside of town, you're lacking that communication. And it has to do with both economics and numbers, we realize. But in sparsely populated areas, it's a big issue – communication is a problem.

The second – I keep hearing a lot of this – we need to help young people. The average age of our producers is constantly going up in the United States, and a lot more people are trying to retire. So I have a possible suggestion that might be worth looking at. If you could provide some sort of an economic or tax benefit to retiring farmers and ranchers who are willing to sell to young producers – most of these farmers and ranchers have had this land and their ranch for decades. When you look at capital gains, when it comes time to sell, if they can get an economic or tax incentive to help at that point with the capital gains, to provide it to young producers, that would be a possibility.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Kerry.

All right, we're going to take one more question here, and then we're going to get ready to kind of wrap things up in just a little bit. So if you do have comments, you might kind of make your ways to the microphone, so we kind of know how many are left. And, go ahead.

MS. CINDY GARRETSON-WEIBEL: Mr. Under Secretary, Senator Thomas, Director Etchepare, thank you for the opportunity to comment today. My name is Cindy Garretson-Weibel, and I'm the Agribusiness director for the Wyoming Business Council. The Wyoming Business Council is the state entity in Wyoming dedicated to economic development, and within the Agribusiness Division we work on agriculture marketing and sustainability of agricultural enterprises.

I'd like to focus comments on the first area, with the next generation of farmers. It's no secret that the average age of farmers in the United States is well over 65 years of age. And even in Wyoming, from the years 1997 to 2002, 25 percent of Wyoming ag producers were under the age of 45, and 5 percent of those were under the age of 35. This, ladies and gentlemen, is very concerning to us. But, recognizing this concern in the last Farm Bill, Congress did pass the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, which was a competitive grants program directed at new farming opportunities for these young farmers and ranchers. However, they failed to fund this program. In addition, the last Farm Bill authorized funding to link beginning farmers and retiring farmers. What a great concept. But the funding was withheld.

The second area I'd like to talk about is under question number six, and that is the USDA value-added producer grant program that was created by the 2002 Farm Bill, which funds efforts to link consumers with family farmers. This is a great concept, but funding was cut 60 percent for that program.

As you can see, there seems to be a pattern here: there were some very exciting programs that were developed through the last Farm Bill. I would encourage these programs to be reauthorized. And, Senator Thomas, if you could encourage Congress to fund these programs that are so very exciting, so USDA can then implement them, and help all of our farm families. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Cindy.

MR. JIM ARNOLD: Well, to reiterate, thank you for the opportunity. My name is Jim Arnold. I'm the rural forestry assistance coordinator for the Wyoming State Forestry Division. I just wanted to reiterate some of the things that were brought up earlier. I'd like to hear more discussion on the forestry issue. First of all, I do appreciate the support that we've received in Washington for the forest stewardship program. As you are aware, that provides technical assistance to non-industrial private forest landowners in management activities. However, with the advent of the Forest Land Enhancement Program, and as was mentioned previously, in Wyoming we have seen our landowner cost-share assistance drop by as much as 80 percent. To put some numbers to that, in 2003, we received \$100,000 in Wyoming under the Forest Land Enhancement Program. In 2004, we received \$32,000. You could imagine trying to address 1.6 million acres of private forested land. And although this is a good thing, over the last several decades there has been a good job done on fire suppression. However, what that has resulted in are overstocked forests coupled with the drought and the insect and disease problems that were mentioned earlier. Certainly there is a need to be able to address these. So my comments go to question four, as to how to implement these programs. And I think consistency of funding. As I look through my files and see the number of deferred applications that I have for timber stand

improvement practices, for example, that are three years old, it makes it rather difficult to get people to sign up for these programs when they understand the possibility of successful funding of these particular applications. So I appreciate the opportunity,. and thanks again.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Jim.

Another comment over here.

MS. NEDALYN TESTOLIN: Good morning. Under Secretary Rey, Senator Thomas, Director Etchepare, I appreciate the opportunity to be here, and I appreciate the fact that you have come to us. And I've certainly listened carefully this morning.

I just wish to speak to one program, and I think I can fit it into number five, and that is the mediation program. In Wyoming we have the Wyoming Agriculture and Natural Resource Mediation Program. I've had the opportunity to chair that, and I've had the opportunity to work with it for many, many years. It is widely used in Wyoming, well supported, and one of the most effective and efficient uses of your dollars that could come about. It is so much cheaper than lengthy litigation, and it opens up avenues of communication. We are working with the Forest Service, we work with the Bureau of Land Management, we work with minerals, mineral development – many kinds – excuse me, I don't know why all of a sudden I became nervous – I spent a lot of time behind the microphone – but I guess it's because I want so badly for all of you to support the mediation program and to continue to see that it is written into the next farm plan. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. And, sorry, what was your name, again?

MS. TESTOLIN: It is Nadelyn Testolin.

MODERATOR: From?

MS. TESTOLIN: Wheatland, Wyoming.

MODERATOR: All right, thank you very much.

MR. ROBERT CLAWSON (sp): Thank you for listening to us today, and I come up here in support of the two young ladies back here, the next generation, the number one question that you have. And in the last few months there's been a tremendous amount of negative press towards the USDA and their opening of the borders, the CAFTA thing, the Canadian thing, the after-midnight vote for the CAFTA thing. And there's a lot of things that are negative for us. And what we need for these young people – and I'm speaking also for a son and daughter that really want to be in ag. One is just – works alongside of me every day, and the other one wants to be there. But they need hope, they need a light at the end of the tunnel. And when they load up their product and go to town, they need to be able to bring home a check large enough to pay the bills, and not have to stop by and pick up another check from the government to make it work. And so I think what we need to do is we need to start rooting for the hometown team, and that's our youth, and look ahead as to how we're going to do that. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Could you state real name real quick.

MR. CLAWSON: Robert Clawson ,and I'm a rancher from south of town here in Converse County.

MODERATOR: All right, thank you.

All right, is there any more comments out there? It's your last chance. I guess if there's no more comments, we'll offer Senator Thomas, Director Etchepare, do you guys care to make any final comments?

SEN. THOMAS: I just want to thank you. I think it's been very important, and I think you've done a great job of talking about some of the things that can go in here. You understand that an agriculture bill doesn't deal with all the issues in the world, and particularly of course agricultural bills authorize spending, but the spending is actually developed by the budget and the other activities. But I think it's important that you've talked about the things for the future. I think you've talked about conservation, I think you've talked about some of these other items.

We usually think of agriculture as being farm subsidies directly for crops and so on, but it is much broader than that. So I'm just very pleased that you were here. I appreciate it. Let's continue to work together. We'll certainly work with the secretary, and we'll look towards the future.

MR. ETCHEPARE: Thank you. Remember, we still have a couple minutes, so if there's any of you – I still see a few out here who came and asked me questions – you still have this opportunity to ask it direct. So if you've got all your questions answered? Is that what I'm hearing from out there?

MODERATOR: I think what he's trying to do is he's trying to avoid all these questions being targeted at him, yeah. (Laughter.) He's just like – keep shoveling this on over.

MR. ETCHEPARE: That's exactly what I'm doing, so help me out. Come on.

But thank you all for coming, and again I wanted to thank the staff and my staff, both here at State Fair, and the staff at the office, for helping getting this set up so that we could have this here, and bring it to the State Fair. And, again, thank you for all of you coming.

MODERATOR: And of course we're going to have Under Secretary Rey.

MR. ETCHEPARE: I just – you know, you always say some things and then think more later. I just want to tell you how good it's been to be able to work with the secretary. We were up to Wapiti Ranger Station a while back, here he was in his tie. But, you know, it's just great to have somebody there who's receptive to the things that we're talking about. So I just wanted to say to the secretary, thank you – not only for being here, but for what you do and your willingness to listen. I think that's great. [Applause.]

UNDER SECRETARY RAY: Well, first, thank all of you for being with us today. And I want to particularly commend you for being respectful of the time limits that we put on your presentation, if not all of the programs that USDA administers. I know, because I often have to sit at a witness chair before Congress – how hard it is to crystallize what it is you want to say in a short period of time. And you all did a very good job of that, and respecting the time.

You might have noted that I did not respond to your comments, although I did take five pages of notes, and we will have a transcript of the ideas and the thoughts and the questions that you provided. One of the reasons I didn't respond is that this is a Listening Session. We're more interested in hearing what you have to say, particularly those of you who wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., or to participate in the more formal process associated with the development of a piece of legislation. So the principal purpose here today

was to hear from you, not to speak to you. And we did get a lot of good insights about what we should be looking at in the next Farm Bill.

Secretary Johanns feels very strongly about these sessions. He's committed himself and us to try to do one or more in every state of the country, so that we can get as much information as possible. He believes that it's probably not possible to draft a good piece of farm legislation without those insights, because of the diversity in American agriculture, and how rapidly our agricultural industry and our rural communities are changing, and how rapidly the global agricultural markets are changing. So we are going to be doing a lot more of these as the year unfolds and as we get into early next, before we sit down and then try to look through everything we've received, and decide how best to proceed. So the insights that you shared with us today are helpful, and we do appreciate them.

I noted one common thread, and that was a concern for younger people, and for people entering agriculture. My most immediate concern for younger people is that they're going to want to use this room in a few short minutes to have lunch, so probably the best thing we can do is wrap up on time. With that, Justin, I'll give it back to you.

MODERATOR: You bet. And I want to reemphasize some of the aspects. If you do have written comments, or you're thinking of something later on, you can go out here and deliver those comments to the help desk out here, and always the Internet. And we've talked about the development of technology and the Internet that's started to take place – in fact, I just did a program on that for our network here this morning – and how we're starting to see that. So you can go online to www.usda.gov. There's a link down there to get into the Farm Bill and add your comments. And also in a week or so you can probably go in there and see what you said, if you have any questions about that.

But, finally, before we go, before we do adjourn, I do want to thank Secretary Rey. Thank you very much for coming to Wyoming. We hope you enjoy your time in Wyoming, and see the Wyoming State Fair. And again to all of you, thank you for coming, and thank you for being a part of the future of agriculture.

[Applause.]